

Bradley R. Smith Interviews Robert Faurisson

It was Robert Faurisson's paper on "The Rumor of Auschwitz" (Le Monde, 29 December 1978) that introduced me to Holocaust revisionism. The night I read it was a milestone in my life. In 1983 Faurisson flew to Southern California from France to give a talk to a conference sponsored by the Institute for Historical Review. I was so taken by the perfect order of his talk and the drift of his character that I knew I wanted to know him, to understand something of his personal story, about how he had gotten into revisionism and so on. So one afternoon that autumn Faurisson visited me in Hollywood. Tom Marcellus and Keith Stimely drove him over. We sat out on the little wooden porch along the side of the house and drank lemonade and beer and cold duck while the hot afternoon air moved down through the canyon through the trees. There were some flies and a couple of cats and dust in the air and a lot of laughing. I made a cassette recording of some of the talk. The transcript of the conversation is about 3,000 words long. Over the years I have interviewed Faurisson again, in Toronto and other places, and through an exchange of letters.

In 1942 I was thirteen and attending a Jesuit school in Marseille. One of my school fellows was named Barbot, or Barberot. Now this Barbot was just as pro-German as I was pro-British. Because of this I refused to shake hands with him.

On the 8th of November 1942 the Americans and British landed in North Africa and three days later the Germans occupied the south of France. When they arrived in Marseille, where I was at school, I saw what splendid horses they had. Splendid! The Germans wanted to occupy the south it was called Vichy France then because now the Americans and the British were close to France and could land in Corsica or near Marseille, which they did in fact in August 1944. Everybody, I suppose, felt at that time that for the Germans it was the beginning of the end.

One day that week I was in the courtyard of the school when I saw Barbot coming towards me, holding out his hand. He had smooth skin and dark hair. He said: "Now they are going to get it in the arse."

But I refused to shake his hand. I asked him: "What do you mean by *they*, Barbot? Who are *they*?"

He said: "*Les Boches*."

"Now, Barbot," I said, "is this you who say *les Boches*?"

He answered: "Yes."

I said: "Now that's surprising, Barbot, because you used to love them." And the little boy, who was thirteen, said: "*Errare humanum est; perseverare diabolicum*." That is: "To err is human; to persevere in it is evil."

I suppose that his father, the evening before, had been saying something like that at dinner. It disgusted me. Now I think it was a good example of opportunism, a good lesson for me, perhaps. I am pretty sure the father of this young boy became a big *Résistant*, the kind we have so many of in France today.

You cannot imagine how much at that time we were brought up in the Ancient World, penetrated by Latin and Greek. I remember that, in a way, I was as much interested in the "news" of the Punic Wars that we were studying in Titus-Livius as I was in the war on the Russian front. Hannibal approaching Rome was an enemy for me like Hitler approaching Stalingrad.

A speaker on Radio-Paris named Jean Hérold Paquis was completely pro-German. During the war he used to finish every speech with this sentence: "*L'Angleterre comme Carthage sera détruite*." Which means, "England, like Carthage, will be destroyed." After the war he was condemned to death and executed.

So you see, Paquis and I were each against Hannibal and for Rome, but it meant exactly the contrary for Paquis and for myself. Comparisons are often like that. They are ambiguous.

Pierre Laval, who was a kind of Prime Minister for Marshal Pétain, made a famous speech on the radio in June 1942. I heard it at our house. Laval said: "I wish for the victory of Germany, because otherwise Bolshevism will be established everywhere in Europe." We children were supposed to listen but after I heard the words, "I wish for the victory of Germany," I refused to listen.

The next morning at school I took out my knife and carved on my black desk top: "*Mort à Laval*." I carved it in big characters.

When the priest came it was our duty to all stand up. This priest was very fat and we called him *Baleine*, which means "whale". He was a

good man but we were afraid of him. That morning in front of my classmates he said to me: "Faurisson, do you think it clever to have done that?"

I didn't say anything. He said something that referred to the battle going on then in North Africa, where the British were retreating before the German army, and the fact that my mother was English. He said: "What about your English soldiers running like rabbits in the desert?" Then he said: "Now, what you must do is take off this desk top, show it to your father, and when you bring it back it must be clean."

I went to the carpentry shop in school and asked for a screwdriver. I took off the desk top, put it on the back of my bicycle and when I got home I showed it to my father. I was terribly afraid but my father only said: "You are a stupid boy, Robert, and an egoist. Remember that your mother is English and that it would not be difficult for her to get into trouble."

The next morning at school I asked the carpenter if he could help me with the desk top. I knew he was Alsatian, so I didn't know if he was for the Germans or against them. He listened to my problem, and he did not say one word. Not one. But he took the desk top and a day or two later I had it back. He had planed it down and painted it black. I took it to class and screwed it down, then everybody could notice something strange. Among all the desks in the classroom, only one was shiny and thin. I suppose that years after the war other pupils must have wondered: "Why is this desk so thin? Eh?"

Now I see that Pierre Laval was half-right and half-wrong in that radio speech. Only half of Europe came to be occupied by the Bolsheviks.

I heard Hitler speak but I did not understand at that time what he was saying. We only supposed that he was mad. In 1943, in Paris, as I was brushing my shoes for the next day this was a kind of ceremony where my father assembled the boys I heard a translation of a speech of Hitler. I remember I was surprised because Hitler said something like: "Now we must all unite together, Nazis and those who are not Nazis."

That surprised me because I had thought everybody in Germany was a Nazi.

My father was very severe. He worked in a shipping company, Les Messageries Maritimes. After dinner the table would be cleared and my father, myself, and my brothers, each one of us began his work. We had to display our books, dossiers and sheets of paper. At 10:30 or 11:00 pm we would go to bed and put out the light immediately. My father would be back in the dining room and work for another hour or two. Then he got up very early and after his *toilette* he would wake us up.

He would go on foot to his office on the Boulevard de la Madeleine. The cleaning ladies there used to clean his bureau first because he was the first to arrive in the morning. He would not take his car or his chauffeur, or the underground. He went on foot. He had his hat. He never wore a scarf, even when it was cold, and he would never put his hands in the pockets of his coat. If we boys were with him we had no right, even if it was very cold, to put our hands in our pockets. We had to move our arms while walking.

At one point in his life he used to make me recite my lessons. I especially remember reciting the declension of the Greek word that means "truth": *aletheia*. Strangely enough, the origin of this word meant "not hidden," therefore "true and sincere". Often when I recited, it became a drama for my father and me, and sometimes I was smacked.

Perhaps it was the same for many French boys of the bourgeoisie at that time.

We children were given no money except for specific purposes and we had to give back whatever change we had. During the war I remember that we were starving at our home in Marseille. My father, who was rather fat, became skinny. My mother could no longer give anything to our cat to eat so she took him to the veterinary surgeon to have him killed with an injection. The name of this cat was Teious, pronounced Tayoos, because my mother had called him "mysterious" in English. We did not know where this cat had come from. My mother used to speak English, and even today she still speaks French with a charming English accent.

My mother loved, and still loves, toiletteries and *luxe*. My father was medium height, rather fat, with blue eyes that were terribly piercing, and he had a crew-cut. He was very strong. He believed that sports were a waste of time and that walking was the best exercise. He believed that music was for the girls, my three sisters.

The only one who felt free at home was the cat we had in Paris. His name was Pompom. He was dark. He had an astonishing special right. When we were all at table, three sisters and four brothers, of whom I was the eldest, and Mother and Father, and even if there were guests, Pompom had the right to climb up on the table and sit on the tablecloth and watch everything. It was not very hygienic. Sometimes we put on the table something that he loved. It was a product for my mother called Springaline. Pompom had the right to put his paw into the box to get some powder on it which he would lick off. He would spread that powder on the tablecloth, but that was his right. We seven children had to behave quite strictly, so for our parents and for us children too it was a kind of psychological release to contemplate this magical cat infringing on the strict rules of our table etiquette.

Then Pompom got very old. At the end of his life he could not even eat. So when my father came back from the office, every evening Monsieur le Directeur would go into the kitchen, fall to his knees, and give milk to our Pompom with a spoon. Father died on March 5, 1978. I assisted him during his agony. It was cancer. He was heroic.

Perhaps I first realized the tragedy of the German people on May 8, 1945 when we heard the air-raid siren. I knew it meant the end of the war against the Germans. We were in Paris then, at 68 rue de Vaugirard, and I was sixteen years old. My father and I opened the window of my bedroom and stood on the balcony, which was five floors up, and he asked me:

"Do you feel glad, Robert?"

His question embarrassed me. I was not at all accustomed to my father asking me such indiscreet questions.

I answered "Yes," but suddenly I was invaded by a sadness. I can't say why precisely. I had lived the war with a great intensity. I had lived it passionately. But now it was over and before me I felt as if I were looking at an empty screen. Inwardly I felt a deep, profound surge backwards, as if something were trying to fill an empty space. It was at that moment, for the first time in my life, that I thought of the Germans as human beings. And suddenly I realized that what was a joy for us, was dreadful for them, and a sadness came over me. It was not thinking. The thinking came later.

I suppose a pianist must feel something like that after a recital. He realizes it is finished and that he is alone. And it's lonely.

One of my teachers was a professor of philosophy, and he was a Jew. His full name was Dreyfus-Lefoyer, but we called him Dreyfus. He was a very little man and he had an ugly face but a charming smile. He had a very pretty wife. He was a doctor in philosophy and doctor in medicine too. He used to tell us: "You see, as I was useless at diagnosis, I did not care to practice medicine."

You see? So he was a professor of philosophy.

Every year Dreyfus had to suffer very much because students put on a kind of variety show where professors were mocked. And every year the role of Dreyfus was played by the smallest student of all his classes. In 1948 Dreyfus heard his role was going to be played by a student called Morel. This Morel had a face like Dreyfus's, but he was very tall. One day Dreyfus asked Morel:

"Is it true, Morel, that you are going to play my role?"

When Morel answered yes, Dreyfus became radiant. But on the day of the show the role of Dreyfus was played by Morel and another student together. Morel sat on a chair behind a table covered with a big tablecloth. No one could see Morel's big feet and legs. The little student hiding behind Morel was also invisible to the audience. This little man showed only two little boots in which he had put his hands. So Dreyfus on the stage looked like a dwarf with his two little legs and boots stamping on the table. It was very cruel, particularly since that night Dreyfus had invited his wife to attend the show.

Sometimes I used to walk with Dreyfus in the street after class. We were in the Latin Quarter in Paris. And I remember very well one day near the Panthéon when we had a discussion about well, from his point of view it was: "Don't you think it was terrible that a people like the Germans who have had Goethe and Kant and Hegel and all those other men and so on, that they did those terrible things?"

And I suppose he said at the same time: "The gas chambers."

And I remember I said to him: "Yes, that is terrible. That is something that cannot be understood."

So you see, at that time I was on his side.

Many years later I was walking past the same place and I remembered coming down that street, the rue Soufflot, with Professor Dreyfus and how we were saying those things about the German people and the terrible things they did to the Jews, and how maybe we had talked about the gas chambers, and I thought about what I would have to say now to Dreyfus.

"Oh, my dear Dreyfus," I would have to say, "it is quite clear that the Germans did not do that."

One day I think this happened in 1947 or 1948 I was told that in another classroom a student had done something scandalous. He had interrupted his professor of history, who was a Jew named Alba, to ask:

"And what about our 300,000 dead at Stalingrad?"

What he meant was that in his heart he was on the side of the Germans, while I suppose Alba was talking about the victims of the Germans. So I wanted to know who had said that. And they told me the young man was named Lospied. I can still remember his name. So I went up to this Lospied and I asked him: "Did you really say that?"

And he told me, "Yes."

So he was on their side. On the side of the Waffen-SS. But he was wrong to think that there were 300,000 dead. It wasn't that many.

I think that in my family everybody was against the Germans, but my father was moderate in his feelings while my mother was hard. It would be pertinent to ask how the Faurisson family, as so many other French families, could be against Hitler and against Communism too. I should even say, against Hitler and ready to act against him with any ally, even the Devil. We were even for the terrorism called *Résistance*.

It was only a long time after the war that I found a kind of logic in the Germans and their collaborators: they were against Communism and terrorism. Communism which was always terrorist, and terrorism which almost always was Communist. I did not see that during the war. I realized only after the war that if the Germans had not fought as they did after Stalingrad, after February 1943, if they had collapsed, the Soviets would not have been stopped in Berlin in 1945. The Soviets would have invaded France and taken Paris and I would have lived under a Communist regime. I wonder what the Americans would have thought about that.

My brothers and sisters did not talk about the Germans. Perhaps they were too young. My mother wasn't very interested in the war. Being very British, I suppose she was absolutely confident that the British would win. My father and I, especially myself, were more anxious. Later, my mother changed her mind about the Germans. Just recently I discovered that after the war, when Pétain was condemned, she said:

"Now I understand Pétain. Now I am on his side."

I remember my father saying: "*Les Allemands font la guerre tristement.*" Or, "The Germans make war sadly. They are a sad people."

I think it was quite true. When the Americans came we saw soldiers who looked happy, joyful. Germans never looked that way. The German soldiers and officers I saw always behaved correctly. Always! I maintain that this is true. Many of their officers looked very distinguished. German soldiers loved music. They used to play concert music.

The Americans often behaved like hoodlums. They were often drunk. I never saw a German drunk. Never. The Germans were very correct with French women, but French women were afraid of the American soldiers. I remember how in Orléans, in September 1944, I nearly had a battle with an American officer. It was perhaps ten o'clock at night and a lady, perhaps forty years old, asked me to escort her to her house because there were many American drunkards around and it was dangerous for a woman to meet up with them at night. Unfortunately, we met an American officer who tried to punch me and capture the lady. While I got rid of the American the lady ran away. Later, when I got to her house, neither she nor her husband would open the door for a long time. They were afraid.

Never would such an incident happen with a German. Obviously I am not speaking here of what the German soldiers, like all soldiers, were able to do to civilians when they were attacked by terrorists or *Résistants*. I, for one, have never heard that a German treated anybody incorrectly, except when there was a crisis.

One day at the beginning of 1944, I saw a Frenchman, drunk, insulting a German officer. "You bastard," he was saying. "You bastard with your war!"

The German officer was saying: "Yes, yes, war is a terrible thing. Oh yes." And he walked gently around the Frenchman and went on his way. This happened in the rue Jean Bart.

When Churchill's "Harris bombers" flew over Germany and attacked day and night to make their "crematoria of living people," some airmen who had had to jump from their planes were shot or lynched by German mobs, but rarely. You certainly do have to say that.

But in daily life in France, the Germans behaved very correctly with ordinary civilians. Obviously, after a "terrorist" attack against Germans in France, the Germans did round-ups of people and so on. And I have read documents reporting on German soldiers who were convicted by German military courts for rape or murder or theft. But they did nothing like what the Allied troops did in Germany in 1945.

I suppose I would be ridiculed today in the USA for saying this, but without our terrorism or *Résistance* the Germans would have behaved in France as they behaved in the occupied Channel Islands, which were British territory. The islands of Jersey and Guernsey. In the Channel Islands the British had the right to sing "God Save the King," and to go on displaying the British flag or coat of arms in the Parliament of Jersey. The German soldiers behaved correctly even while their comrades were having to fight British troops in North Africa and Italy. At the end the Germans deported some of the young men from the islands to the continent because of the risk of a landing of Allied troops in those islands. At the same time they were terrible with the Poles and the Russians who committed so many attacks against German civilians and soldiers. So you yourself behave like the man you are facing.

At that time one of my best friends was a Jew named Brunshwig. Jacques Brunshwig was so clever that right at the beginning when we were in *Première Supérieure Préparatoire* he was nicknamed *le Cacique*, the Chief. And the next year in *Première Supérieure* he was still called *le Cacique*. And we were right. After only two years of preparation he succeeded brilliantly and got into the most prestigious *Grande École* of France, L'École Normale Supérieure, which is very close to the Lycée Henri-IV and the Panthéon. Brunshwig was first in the writing exams, first in the oral exams, and first in the *agrégation de philosophie*. His speciality was Greek philosophy.

One day professor Dreyfus gave Jacques back his essay, which had the best mark in the class, and told him: "Now, Brunshwig, I am afraid you are too clear in what you write. Your answers to my questions are so easy to understand that it makes people like me uncomfortable. We wonder if our questions are not a little stupid. Do you understand? Yes?"

"Well, I am going to give you some advice, Brunshwig. For the competitive examination, try to put some obscurity into what you write."

So you see, professor Dreyfus had a sense of humor, and he gave good advice. I must say that.

Myself, I have never understood anything in philosophy, but I always understood Jacques Brunshwig. I must say that we, the two of us, never discussed philosophical matters, but only such things as French, Greek, Latin, and "what is life?" One day, however, he said something that did not suit me at all. I don't know any more if it was about Nuremberg or about one of the Communist trials, but it wouldn't make any difference.

He said: "That is revolutionary justice."

So I found out that there could be two kinds of justice, you see? Revolutionary justice and another kind.

In the time I knew Brunshwig he used to write with a pen, like all of us. But his ink was violet, and he wrote in a beautiful script. I wonder now what he thinks of my work. I would like to know.

Oh, there are many, many Jews that I remember. At that time I didn't think about how many Jews there were. I have a bad memory, and I am getting old now, but those days I remember very well. And I can tell you the names of the persons who were in my class after the war. And many of them were Jews.

So I should have thought, well, there has been a final solution, an extermination and all that, so how can so many Jews be here? Gotland, Abbou, Jacques Brunschwig, Attia, Laufer, Malamon, Evrard, Professor Alba. And then there was professor Dreyfus, Epstein, Vidal-Naquet and many others. But I never thought of that.

At that time, even after the war, nobody heard expressions like "final solution." Oh, no. At that time we spoke of concentration camps, but I think that was all. Perhaps there were specialists who said things we didn't say.

When I was at university I read a book by Maurice Bardèche entitled *Nuremberg ou La Terre Promise*. The title means something like "this is what awaits all the future vanquished." For whoever loses a war will henceforth have to face a masquerade like the Nuremberg trials.

So I read this book, and it was very surprising for me. I remember I bought it at a black market price, perhaps in 1949. I cannot remember where the money came from. From my aunts perhaps. I bought it on the black market because it was prohibited at that time. It was forbidden. I think I might say that intellectual curiosity has been the cause of many of my failures and many of my successes.

Bardèche's book was published on 12 October 1948 and was banned right away, and Bardèche, who was a professor, was put in jail for several months after he was convicted of "trying to justify the crimes of Nazism", or something like that. The first sentence of Bardèche's book was: "I do not defend Germany; I defend the truth." And he went on to say that perhaps truth sometimes is difficult to find, but that everybody knows what a lie is. The last sentence of the book was: "Our destiny is playing now in Germany. We must choose whether we want to have the SS with us or against us."

This was a reference to a dilemma of the Cold War. That is, are the Germans ready to be on our side or will they be on the side of the USSR? I think that in 1948 and 1949 every Frenchman agreed that the SS soldiers had been very good soldiers, even if some of them might have committed the massacre of Oradour-sur-Glane. And I remember that I, too, thought of the SS, the Waffen-SS, as men who perhaps had been very good soldiers.

I remember a certain discussion about that in the Latin Quarter near the Jardin du Luxembourg with some of my friends, and I said: "This Nuremberg trial is disgusting," or something like that. That it was a masquerade. That it was *Vae victis*, but with hypocrisy.

After I had read Bardèche's book I encountered a Jew in the Jardin du Luxembourg, and he pleaded with me to lend him my copy. After a long hesitation I lent it to him. When he did not give it back I asked him to pay me the price that I had paid for it. He replied that he would never give me money for such a disgusting book.

Robert Brasillach was a novelist, a literary and film critic, and a journalist. He was a Fascist even before the war. He was for Franco and against the *Brigades Internationales*. He wrote, together with Maurice Bardèche, a very well known *Histoire du Cinéma*. Bardèche married Brasillach's sister. During the war Brasillach was for the Germans and against Communism. At the "Liberation" he was put in jail, where he wrote some poems, and at his trial he was very courageous. He did not say: "I was wrong." His lawyer, Jacques Isorni, accepted this attitude, which was tantamount to committing suicide, and Brasillach was condemned to death for having been a collaborator.

Many intellectuals asked Charles de Gaulle to pardon him. François Mauriac said to Isorni: "I have seen de Gaulle. Brasillach will be pardoned." But he was not. Nobody knows what happened in de Gaulle's mind. So Brasillach was shot on the 6th of February, 1945, while the war was still going on in Germany. At the time, Brasillach was 35 or 36 years old. He had attended the École Normale Supérieure.

So after all this had happened, one day in school in the classroom, I saw an inscription on the blackboard that was very surprising for me. It said: "Robert Brasillach will be avenged." Well, at that time I did not know who this Robert Brasillach was, so I asked: "Who is this man?" And I discovered who he was and why he had been shot. And I thought about it.

In 1977 Miss Cécile Dugas, who was my student in Lyon, asked me to be in charge of her thesis on Brasillach. I agreed, although I do not much appreciate his writings. The first task that I assigned to Cécile Dugas was to answer this question: "Is Brasillach precise?"

After a few weeks she replied. Her answer was "No."

The significance of my question was this: I always want to know whether an author recognizes precision. If he is vague, then I think that's bad. I put my question in order to make her understand that I was not very interested in guiding a work about an author who was not precise. Although she knew Brasillach very well, I do not think that she had asked herself this question. I do not like Brasillach because you may think that he is saying something, but then you realize that it is all words with him and a kind of romanticism that is not worth a farthing.

Cécile Dugas proved to be the most courageous of my students when the troubles began for me on 16 November 1978. I will tell you about all that. Cécile Dugas is extraordinarily clever, precise and subtle. In France she is known now as the best specialist on Brasillach.

Just after the war at the Sorbonne, at least in the literature department, the Communists had a terrible power over the intelligentsia. It was impossible to criticize them. There was the same fear in the Sorbonne as in the Communist countries. I am not exaggerating. There was something like a Communist terror among the intellectuals. As a matter of fact, the most influential of those Communists were Jews. I remember a student, he was perhaps already thirty years old and should no longer have been a student, and his name was Louis Hay. And I remember a girl, rather small, with magnificent breasts. Her name was Rabinovitch. And they were always asking us to sign petitions for this or that, but always something Communist. I used to refuse.

But one day I was so afraid that I understood that I would have to sign, and that is how Robert Faurisson came to sign a Communist

petition protesting against the fact that Joliot-Curie, an atomic scientist, had been expelled from the Atomic Energy Agency because he was a Communist. What was my fear? I do not really know what would have happened. I suppose I was afraid that if I did not sign, then the atmosphere would become unbearable for me and I would have to quit my classes.

You cannot imagine the stupidities we had to swallow from the Communists. For example, Stalin was regarded as a genius even in linguistics. Stalin's friend, Lysenko, had invented a new science of biology that would produce enormous tomatoes and allow corn to grow everywhere. Communist scientists were circulating a petition that said more or less that Lysenko was the greatest biologist in Europe. We were told to believe that *Pravda* did not report accidents of motorcars, railways, airplanes, or natural catastrophes and so on because in Soviet Russia such things did not happen any more. We were told to believe that Tito was a traitor and that South Korea had attacked North Korea.

The show trials of people like Laszlo Rajk in Hungary and other Communists were praised as fair and just. Excellent! The proof was that the accused always gave confessions. The accused always wrote confessions and confessed in court that they were traitors paid by the CIA and so on. And the fact was that in France I did not know one Jew who was not a Communist, or apparently a Communist or crypto-communist, which was the French term. Crypto meant that maybe you did not want to give the impression you were a Communist, but that underneath you were. A Communist who does not say outright that he is a Communist. In America you used to call them pinky commies. No? Not exactly? Pinkos? Something like that.

Have I told you about how I discovered the drama of the Germans at a trial? No? But I really must tell you this story. It was after the time of my *baccalauréat*, perhaps in 1949. I suppose I was about twenty years old. I was in a class where we did intensive Greek, Latin, history, French and so on. And philosophy. I did not like French much, but I loved Latin and Greek. In philosophy I understood absolutely nothing. And we had a teacher called Lacroix, but we called him le Krouks. He was a man of perhaps fifty-five, but he looked seventy. And he spoke like this: "the-the-the-the." He was a man who stuttered. And he didn't stand up straight, he moved bent over, and he was a little bit uncleanly too. So he looked a bit stupid, you see? But he was so intelligent, so brilliant! He told us once: "There are two great Hellenists in France. The other one is dead."

One day in the classroom a mate tapped me on the shoulder (he was sitting behind me), and said: "Will you come tomorrow to the trial of a collaborationist? Because Lacroix is going to be there. He is going to say something for the collaborationist, because this collaborationist was his pupil a few years ago."

And I said: "Oh, yes! Certainly. We will go. It will be comical to see Lacroix do his *the-the-the-the* in front of the judges."

So we went to the courtroom, I can assure you, to laugh. Because I love to laugh, eh? All my life I have loved to laugh. So we went there, three of us. One of us was the son of a magistrate who was very well known. His name was Dejean de la Batie. The other one, I don't remember his name, and myself. We went into this room where the judges were. We didn't pay any attention to the collaborationist, who was in the dock. We were waiting for Lacroix.

Suddenly the usher said: "Bring in the witness." And we saw Lacroix then. He came in all crooked with his chin on his chest and we said to ourselves: "Oh yes, this is going to be comical."

And this professor Lacroix was presented as a man of the *Résistance*. I don't know if it was true or not, because there are many people in France who claim to have been in the *Résistance*, but who knows if they were? Lacroix spoke for perhaps five minutes. Perhaps it was not even that long. I do not know exactly the words he found but I can assure you, when he spoke you could have heard a fly. I remember that he said: "This collaborationist, he was my pupil, he made a mistake in getting into the *Milice*, it was truly a mistake, but anybody can make a mistake." Words like that. Simple words. But they were very beautiful, and I was moved.

The *Miliciens*, you know, were Frenchmen who fought against the *Résistance*, whom they called terrorists. They were French, they wore a French uniform, and they were for the Germans, against the *Résistance* and Communism.

So Lacroix talked about that, but the words he found were beautiful. They were a miracle. They were so humane. So humane. And then he went away and I was still there, and I looked at this man in the dock for the first time. I considered him, and I realized that this collaborationist was a man who had had for his teacher Lacroix, just as I had. He was a human being, just as I was. I am not saying I was amazed. Not at all. But I began to listen to what the judge said, and I discovered that this collaborationist had done one thing. On the 14th of July 1944, on Bastille day, which is our national holiday.

On that day in 1944 in the Prison de la Santé and I must tell you that *santé* means "good health" so there are many jokes made about that prison and every Frenchman knows this name because of the jokes so on that day the criminal class inside the prison made a revolt. Not the people who were there because they were in the *Résistance*, but the ordinary criminals, they made the revolt. But it was a very bad time for such a revolt. The Anglo-American Army was in Normandy, very close to Paris. The situation was very grave for the Germans, and very grave for the *Miliciens* and for the collaborationists. It was an impossible time to permit such a revolt. So during the night of the 14th to the 15th of July, there had been a court martial, and this collaborationist who was in the dock had presided there. And he had condemned to death some of those people in the revolt, and now he was being prosecuted for that.

I remember how a woman who worked as a doorkeeper came into the court and said: "I saw this guy in a German uniform. Yes, Mr President, I can assure you I saw that."

Which was so stupid! Because the *Miliciens* wore French uniforms. And in the dock the collaborationist said nothing. But the president of the Court questioned him as if he had already been proved guilty. With contempt, calling him not by his name, but *cet individu* which means "fellow," or "guy." His lawyer did not object to this. The collaborationist did not object. So you got the clear impression that it was impossible in that court to object to anything. The collaborationist's name was Pierre Gallet, and I recall that he had red hair. He was

quite dignified, and during all the trial he said very few words.

The second day, which was the last day of the trial, I went back. And the collaborationist Gallet was condemned to death. People shouted at that: "Shame! Scandal!" Friends of Gallet shouted: "We are on your side, Pierre!" And I can tell you that I was very moved. Perhaps I can say that I was overwhelmed. Because for the first time in my life I had before me a man who was condemned to death. And I became ashamed at how I had hated this Gallet. I felt ashamed about the trial, because the way Gallet had been examined looked to me like a scandal. And perhaps at that moment I discovered something about my hate for the Germans, the *Miliciens* and for the collaborationists. I discovered something about all that, and about my hate, which I did not like very much. Not at all.

When I got back to my house that night I found my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters all at the dinner table. My father did not say anything. So I sat down I must have apologized for being late and tried to eat my soup. But I was indignant. I was overwhelmed. I was ready to cry. What I remember is that I told my father I had attended that trial of the collaborationist. I wanted to get a word of sympathy from him, but it did not come. It did not come from my brothers and sisters either. It was typical of our family that we did not express feelings of this kind. There was, in fact, no solidarity among us because of the excessive authority of my father. We did not speak at table unless we were permitted to ask a question.

I can still remember the color of the liquid of the soup that night, clear and orange, like carrots. I can remember the reflection of the electric light twinkling in my soup, not strong, but yellow and clear. I remember the sound the spoon made against the side of the dish that evening. I remember this very well because it was always the same plates of earthenware, the same sound.

There was a plate, and on this plate a soup plate, and they each had two lines, red and blue around the edge. And then, so each person sitting and eating could see it on each plate, there was the coat of arms of the Messageries Maritimes, an anchor with "M" on one side and ropes on the other, and a unicorn. During all my youth I had this unicorn in front of me and I never knew it was also a mediæval symbol of purity. But that night, it did not matter how moved I was. It was still necessary to scratch the silver spoon against the edge of the plate so that while I ate no drops fell back into the soup. Then I had to swallow it without making any noise. You had to control yourself in our house. Control your hand, control your soup, control your breathing, control your feelings. That is why, perhaps, I lost control.

I got up and I suppose I said: "Excuse me." And I went to the bathroom and threw up. I vomited. And I can tell you, that night I vomited up many things. Many of the things I had believed for so long. And from that day, I began to think.

Perhaps that was not thinking, eh? It is a difficult question for me. When I used to remember the Gallet trial I always would think: "That was the beginning of thought for me." But the more I am obliged to go back into my past, the more I think this is an illusion.

It took time for me to understand the tragedy of a real Apocalypse. We had seen the photos of the awfully bombed German cities. The Germans had fallen after a kind of epic adventure. There is no epic if you are not vanquished. You see that very well in *The Persians*, the tragedy of Aeschylus. Aeschylus was Greek; the Greeks had vanquished Xerxes and the Persians. Aeschylus saw that he could not write something profound if he described the sufferings of the Greeks. He chose the sufferings of Xerxes and the Persians.

I was stunned when I discovered how generous and chivalrous Aeschylus had been with his enemies, perhaps only eight years after their defeat. It was not Christianity that brought generosity and a spirit of chivalry to the pagans. The pagans already understood those things. If Aeschylus were to come back to earth today he would not be able to understand how it is that forty years after the defeat of Germany there is still so much hate against Germany. In our society everything is used up very quickly and changed quickly, but not this hate for Germany. There is nothing like this feeling against the Japanese. I think it is the terrible responsibility of Jews for maintaining this hate. Jews have no complaints against the Japanese. That is why they do not ask the American people to keep up a hatred against them. There are no longer any "war criminals" among those who were not enemies, or were not thought to be enemies, of the Jews. "Crimes against humanity" really means crimes against Jews. You would think only the Jews were really human beings. What about the rest of us?

(Revised 1998)

First display on aaargh: 2 April 2001

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